

2/18/2016

I am writing to request that the Department of Developmental Services' budget NOT be cut. There is already a problem with underfunding and additional budget cuts will only make life more difficult for my family.

My husband and I are guardians for my developmentally challenged brother who is 52 years old. In 2001, my mother and brother came to live with my husband and our two children. At that point in time, it worked out well. My mother helped with my brother and my kids, we helped my mom with household duties, driving and meals. My brother began to attend the day programs at Ability Beyond where they helped him get a job which he really enjoyed. In 2013, everything changed.

In 2013, my brother was diagnosed with cancer. I took off 4-5 months from work to care for him. He amazingly recovered. We found that physically he was no longer to perform his job. Ability Beyond was flexible and changed his day program to only "fun stuff." Then, my mother became very ill and needed to move into a nursing home. At the same time, my daughter left for college. This left only my husband, my son and I at home to help with my brother. This made life more difficult. My brother is mentally the equivalent of a 7-8 year old and cannot be left home alone for long periods of time. We are constantly having to choose whether to bring my brother with us where ever we go, or having my teenage son staying home, or calling my daughter home from college, or paying a babysitter or having my brother stay home alone. This is not easy. Also, my brother is bored at home. We cannot always entertain him, especially on weekends. I often have to hire a babysitter to keep him busy. A couple of weekends a year he gets to go to a state respite center, but not often enough or long enough. Last year due to budget cuts, the hours of the respite center were cut back from Thursday-Tuesday to Thursday-Monday. I would hate to see the hours cut back even more.

At this point in time, my brother needs to be in a group home. After beating cancer, he deserves to start a new life and live on his own. He wants to be more active and needs more people around him, but I have been told that there is no money in the state budget for him to receive residential funding for a group home. I was told that only emergency cases were being considered and that I could classify him as an emergency but then he could end up in a group home anywhere in the state. This would be even worse for him. He needs to be close to me because I am all he has. Plus, as a cancer survivor, he needs to be close to his oncologist. My brother is 52 years old and needs to be settled somewhere. I dread to think what would happen to him if something were to happen to me. I need him to be settled, but I can't get him into a group home due to lack of funding in the state budget.

Please do not cut the state budget for the Department of Developmental Services. My family needs more services than are currently available and I'm afraid of how much worse things could get for our family. Also, please continue to fund Ability Beyond so that they can continue to provide my brother with the day programs he loves so much. My brother has so little. Please help in any way you can.

Thank you,

Carolyn Arneth
3 Settlers Ln
Sandy Hook, CT 06482
gavcar912@gmail.com